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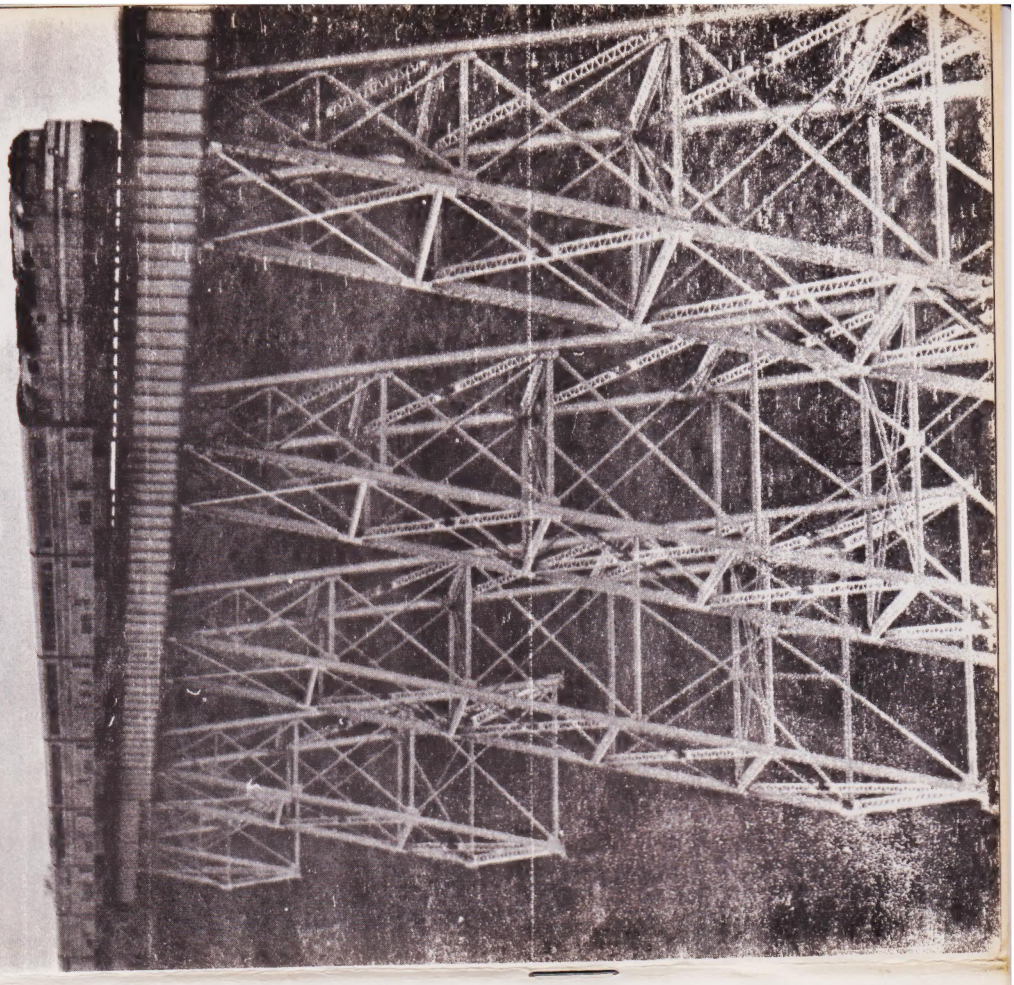

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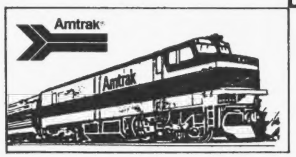

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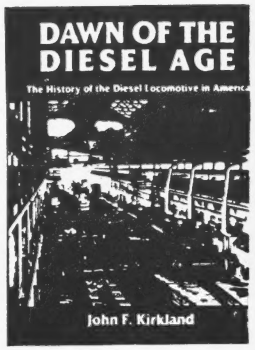

● "Dawn of the Diesel Age", subtitled "The History of the Diesel Locomotive in America", is now available from publisher Interurban Press (PO Box 6444, Glendale CA 91205).

The author, John F. Kirkland, was a New York Central-trained engineer who set up and ran the first Diesel locomotive manufacturing department for the Baldwin Locomotive Works. As the publisher notes, Kirkland was a keen observer of the entire industry, and has produced the "definitive history of the years of Diesel locomotive development up to 1937." The hardcover, 8½x11 book has 204 pages, 240 photos including fantastic dust jacket painting of 1930 Westinghouse factory interior that could be mistaken for an extraordinary color photo for its day. $29.95 ($1.50 post. + Cal tax).

● "Steam Passenger Service Directory" 1983 edition is out (published by Empire State Railway Museum Inc., PO Box 666, Middletown NY 10940; $5.00, paperbound). As ever, this guide is a detailed and authoritative compendium of the tourist railroad, trolley and museum operations of the U.S. and Canada, illustrated. Each line is illustrated with a black & white photo. Included bound in the book are discount coupons that can be used on many of the lines.

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ON THE COVER

The Deschutes River excursion train of May 14-15 crosses the Willow Creek Bridge near Madras, Oregon on the second day of the trip. Full coverage of that trip appeared in our last issue. Photo by Peter Putnam Bretz.

LETTERS

Please! Stop looking at Amtrak's ridership figures thru your rose-colored glasses. In referring to March 1983 ridership figures (RTN 266) which indicate a 15.3% increase nationwide, you state: "This very substantial increase was undoubtedly due to the All Aboard America fares that began in February." The fact is that if it hadn't been for the rail strikes in NJ, NY and CT, Amtrak would barely have kept pace with March, 1982. Didn't that 113% increase for NY-Phila tweak your interest just a bit? New Jersey Transit riders flocked to Amtrak during that strike.

In fact, for discount fares that were supposed to improve long distance ridership, they appear to have done little more than stop the long downward slide. An increase of 1.2% for long distance with 8 of 17 routes still showing decreases is nothing to crow about and certainly not "substantial". This, too, at a time when virtually all airlines are showing substantial increases in numbers of passengers carried and passenger miles.

Stephen J. Salatti
Mexico, New York

You might have mentioned the reason for the 113% increase in New York-Philadelphia passengers in March (RTN 266)--New Jersey Transit was on strike all month, and SEPTA half of March. Many who, for example, pay $8.75 to ride NJT from Trenton to New York and return, took Amtrak instead for $15.70 and a slightly faster ride. Keep this in mind too for next year to explain why March 1984 will be so far below March 1983.

E. Everett Edwards
Abington, Pennsylvania

(When we suggested that explanation to Amtrak when RTN 266 was in preparation, they said they didn't know the reason for the increase--Ed.)

In RTN 267, Mr. J. Newcomb makes a good case for not using the train for overnight business travel. It is my opinion that some questions remain, however.

First, the problem of high rail fares has been addressed by Amtrak and hopefully they will continue to do so. Also, one would hope that the airlines will stop their self-destructive rate wars (Eastern Airlines is now in trouble) and restore some sanity to their rate structure.

Second, are all business appointments in the afternoon? Hardly! It is this fact that will make it possible for Amtrak to compete for business travel by establishing overnight service between major cities. For example, let's say a businessman in Detroit has an appointment in New York the following morning. He can either fly to New York in the evening and stay overnight in a hotel until his appointment the following morning, or he could have a leisurely dinner in Detroit before the departure of his train. After departing, the businessman could get some work done or have a drink or two in the lounge car before turning in for the night. He would then arrive in New York at the start of the business day, relaxed and ready for work.

Flying to New York at the start of the business day would be out of the question, as it would consume too much time, once trip times to and from the airports are taken into account. The train, by contrast, arrives in the heart of the business district, thus saving a considerable amount of time. Also, the train would be less expensive than flying and spending a night in a hotel.

Of course, Amtrak in its present state can hardly compete for this business--there simply aren't enough trains running to make it a viable operation, and without a complementing network of fast corridor trains this service would be less than successful. Also, as Mr. Newcomb says, Amtrak would have a difficult time trying to compete for afternoon business travel--the advantage of the airplane is just too great to overcome. However, I believe that properly promoted, a service such as I have discussed here CAN take some of the business travel that now goes by plane. It certainly would be better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all!

Bill Hutchison
Ashtabula, Ohio

In spite of what Mr. Newcomb says, there are many people, including businessmen, who in some cases would prefer to take the train, and who do so when possible. I am sure that Amtrak does not expect to get ALLthe passengers away from the airlines, but they must make some marketing efforts to get SOME of the passengers. Also the airlines are not Amtrak's only competitor; there are many people driving who would and do take the train for some trips...

As to the higher train fares, we can thank the U.S. Government--and especially the present administration--with its transportation "policy" which has deregulated the airlines, causing them to have self-destructive rate wars and artificially low fares; and at the same time has demanded that Amtrak cut its losses, forcing artificially high rail fares.

John J. Bowman, Jr.
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

I am finally compelled to write concerning the rash of complaints about Amtrak diners appearing in RTN. I believe the other side of the coin must be expressed.

My rail trips are as follows: The CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, Oct 1982; the EAGLE in Jan 1983; the BROADWAY, Feb 83 eastbound and the LAKE SHORE westbound; the ZEPHYR/DESERT WIND from Osceola IA to Las Vegas and return in March; the SOUTHWEST LIMITED in Feb and Mar and last October. With only one exception, the food service was excellent. That exception was on the LAKE SHORE, and I understand the offending waiter was fired.

In every instance, not only was the food ample and well-prepared, but service was excellent. I never once found any "greasy" scrambled eggs. Granted the food is airline style, but the portions were more than adequate, the price fair and service prompt. As a matter of fact in March on the ZEPHYR there were 700 people on the train out of Denver, and people were being fed in half-hour shifts. We chose the 7pm sitting and had to wait only 15 minutes for our food. The crew was working hard; the people were happy. This was usually the case on all our trips with the exception of a disaster on the LAKE SHORE caused by a waiter who was either losing his mind or was involved in some sort of protest. I understand he is no longer with Amtrak.

Pete VanZanten, Director, NARP Region IX
Kansas City, Missouri

(We personally found that on our trip in early April, service was satisfactory. However, with the introduction of new menus around the end of April, which required more preparation time, Amtrak dining car crews exhibited what appeared to be widespread slowdowns in protest. Amtrak responded by stating it would increase the kitchen crews by one man per dining car--see last issue.--Ed.)

Re Carl Loucks's National Slow Train Survey (RTN 267): A nice little survey, but I must nominate a new leader for the NASTY train-of-the-year record: The COAST STARLIGHT. Flash! Safety belts and crash helmets are now stock issue between Glendale and Los Angeles each day as the southbound train arrives from northern points. Until the Apr 24 timetable change, passengers on the southbound train could look forward to a blissfully calm 58 minutes to traverse the six scenic miles between suburban Glendale and downtown Los Angeles. It was a restful--tho interminable--trip at a breathtaking 6.2 mph. All that came to an end on Apr 24 when the new timetable rashly assigned the reckless time schedule allotment of 38 minutes for this 6-mile trek. If God had meant for man to travel this fast, he would have provided him with wings! This astonishing speed now is blistering the rails between Glendale and L.A. at the death-defying rate of 9.47mph. We will probably be soon receiving reports of heat-damaged skin on the Superliner cars.

Paul Rayton
Los Angeles, California

★ HOUSE COMMITTEE VOTES AMTRAK FUNDS

The House Appropriations Committee on June 16 approved Fiscal 84 funding of $720 million for Amtrak, plus $25 million previously earmarked for the Shelbyville line and not needed for that purpose. The funds were part of a total of $11.3 billion for the Department of Transportation, which is more than $900 million higher than the White House wanted. Budget Director David Stockman said that he and DOT Secretary Elizabeth Dole would have difficulty recommending the president's approval of the bill, but the Wall Street Journal indicated that it is unlikely to be vetoed. The White House wanted only $662 million for Amtrak, but that is not its major complaint with the bill; one of its biggest complaints is in mass transit funding (see Urban-Suburban Transit, page 7).

Here are some features of the Amtrak portion, as reported by NARP: The federal share of funding for Atlantic City service was increased to 60%, but Amtrak is allowed to operate the service only if revenues cover 80% of short term avoidable costs in the first year, and 100% thereafter. It recommends that Amtrak achieve 60% revenue/cost ratio systemwide by 1987. It urges Amtrak to discontinue the new Auto-Ferry service if the service has a net loss in a given fiscal year. And it urges Amtrak to approve a 403-b application for New Orleans-Mobile service; however, NARP noted that there is some doubt that Amtrak will receive such an application.

★ EMPLOYEES OFFER TO BUY CONRAIL

The Reagan Administration has been trying for two years to sell Conrail off to the private sector, but Congress has blocked that action. Now that Conrail is moving into the area of profitability, Conrail's own 40,000 employees announced on June 14 that they wanted to buy the railroad. Their plan to do so included obtaining a private loan of $500 million and offering additionally $1.5 billion in wage deferrals and tax benefit deferrals. The Chairman of Conrail, L. Stanley Crane, said he was skeptical of the offer because of the large loan it entailed. The New York Times editorialized (Jun 13) that "The new danger is that the Feds will sell the WHOLE system before costs are cut further and before there is a sense of where it fits in the national transportation network." The Time feels that "the question of who runs Conrail, and how, has a lot to do with the future health of the Northeast. It may, for example, make sense to arrange a marriage between a leaner Conrail and a Western railroad seeking to extend its reach cross-country. Sell Conrail now to the highest bidder might make it difficult to create such a transcontinental carrier later on."

Sixteen rail unions are involved in the purchase offer, having worked on the proposal for the past 18 months. Conrail is 85% owned by the Federal Government. The $500 million in cash would be loaned with the assistance of the Chase Manhattan Bank. The unions want to own the railroad in order to protect their members' jobs. They said that if a private owner buys Conrail, the owner would probably keep the best parts and abandon other big segments of the road. In order to assure the government that the railroad would be able to continue without government help, the unions included a provision in their offer by which private purchase of the road would be encouraged in the event that the employees could not run it profitably.

RAIL CANADA

SUMMER/FALL EDITION of VIA's system timetable is out, with effective date May 29. No expiration date is given on the timetable. A VIA press release accompanying it pointed out the following: "Most important of the changes will be the introduction of a completely new train service, the CHALEUR, between Montreal and Gaspe. The new train, featuring sleeping car, snack and beverage services, will depart Montreal's Central Station at 11:30pm, arriving in Gaspe at 4:20pm the following day. The return train, No. 17, will depart Gaspe at 8:50pm, arriving Montreal at 1:35pm. Adjustments have been made to the departure and arrival times of the eastern transcontinental, the OCEAN. Effective May 29, the eastbound OCEAN will depart Montreal at 7pm, arriving Halifax at 4:20pm. The westbound OCEAN, train No. 15, will depart Halifax at 12:55pm, arriving Montreal at 8:30 the next morning. Timetables for trains serving Sydney, Saint John and Fredericton have been adjusted to facilitate connection with the eastern transcontinental. There will be no changes in the schedule of the western transcontinental,the CANADIAN, altho timetables have been adjusted to reflect the fact that Saskatchewan remains on Standard Time. Train Nos. 185 and 186 between Sudbury and White River will operate on a tri-weekly schedule for the duration of the peak season, Jun 21-Sep 7. Train 185 will travel between Sudbury and White River on Tues, Thurs, and Sats, with 186 making the return journey on Weds, Fris and Suns. Trains between Calgary and South Edmonton will begin operating on reduced running times between the two cities and will offer snack and beverage services for the first time (beginning July 1)." (Trains 195-197 are 20mins faster, and trains 194-196 are 15 and 25mins faster respectively.) Beginning July 1 also, transfers will be provided between South Edmonton and downtown Edmonton stations. The new system timetable, which bears a color cover photo of a VIA train crossing the Louven River in New Brunswick, closely resembles its predecessor in appearance, and is easily mistaken for it.

★ ★ ★

VIA RAIL CANADA will attempt to cut back the CANADIAN from Montreal to a Vancouver-Toronto only operation. Guy Chartrand, Transport 2000 President, unveiled these plans at a Jun 14 press conference in Montreal. The reason for the cutback, T-2000 said, is to save money, partly by eliminating costly transfers from CN's Central Station to CP's Glen Yard for servicing of equipment. A major battle appears to be shaping up, with T-2000 reportedly assured of union support. T-2000 is also seeking support from the city of Montreal and other sources. Commented T-2000 Ottawa-region Director Harry Gow: "The VIA plan is unnecessary. The same money, and more, could be saved by returning to the former Sudbury split with services to and from Montreal and Toronto, but eliminating the Ottawa-Sudbury tri-weekly Dayliner, and servicing the cars at Central Station (perhaps at the ex-Turbo bays), with heavy repairs done in an addition to VIA's Can-Car facilities. The present budget desperation betrays the federal bureaucracy's bankruptcy of policy and VIA's lack of creativity."

TRANSPORT 2000 SASKATCHEWAN elected a new president at its May 28 meeting in Regina. He is Don Abel, Mayor of Melville, Sask., and a leader in the national campaign to restore and improve rail passenger services. He said that one of his priorities will be restoration of passenger service from Winnipeg to Edmonton on the line via Melville and Saskatoon. "The signs are encouraging that VIA Rail may be moving in this direction," he said, "and we intend to keep up the pressure."

MANITOBA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION is pushing for a project that would provide rail-bus service to remote northern communities. In an Apr 20 meeting at Thompson, Manitoba, under the auspices of the CTC, a rail-bus feasibility study was considered. An executive committee was set up, which meets again Jun 21. The study found that conversion of an MC9 highway bus to run on rails would cost only $300,000 per vehicle, less than one-third the cost of an RDC.

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION will hold public hearings July 5-8 on possible discontinuance of Newfoundland local passenger trains.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

HOUSTON VOTERS DEFEATED on June 11 a $2.35 billion bond issue to start building a rail rapid transit system. The vote was a decisive 69,534 to 41,931. Analysts blamed a high-handed manner in which the proposal was presented to the public. There were indications that proponents of the system would try again, noting that in Atlanta two tries were necessary before passage.

HOUSE APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE'S approval of an $11.3 billion transportation bill (see page 5) means that $2.49 billion in urban mass transit block grants will be available if the legislation as it now stands is signed into law. The block grant money can be used for equipment purchases and for operating expenses. The Administration wanted an amount $515 million lower, and also wanted a limit of $275 million on the funds usable for operating expenses. The bill also includes $465 million for construction of new transit systems. The House subcommittee had earlier set $100 million of the money for the Houston system, but since that city voted down their bond issue, only $5.5 million for planning was appropriated to it. Instead, an additional $17.5 million was given to Los Angeles for its planned system, raising its total appropriation to $127.5 million. Atlanta was given $82.5 million. The bill also includes $1.25 billion to cover mass transit capital spending, this money coming from the 1¢ per gallon gasoline tax portion of the 5¢ per gallon increase that took effect Apr 1. Bus project funding was increased to $280 million in the bill, higher than the $215 million set earlier by the subcommittee. The Administration is opposed to the higher spending levels of the transportation bill, but reportedly will not veto it.

WASHINGTON METRORAIL SYSTEM received the first two cars of its second generation of equipment in late May. The cars are built in Italy but assembled at Amtrak's Beech Grove plant. The cars have not been formally accepted yet.

AMTRAK AND MARYLAND in June reached the first agreement about expansion of commuter services in the Baltimore-Washington area since 1976, NARP said. And starting July 5 Amtrak will no longer accept commuter tickets on peak-hour intercity trains, and will impose an 85¢ per ticket surcharge for commuters during off-peak hours. Starting July 1 BLUE RIDGE passengers using commuter tickets will pay a 50¢ surcharge per ticket.

NEW YORK SUBWAY station remodeling is stymied because of the high cost of installing elevators for the handicapped, as required by state law. The New York Times attacks this problem in a Jun 17 editorial in which it urges Gov. Cuomo to consider changing the law. It says the small use of elevators and other handicapped devices in transit systems does not justify their side dispersal around a system. New York city buses with wheelchair elevators now total 1362, the Times says, while only 10 to 20 disabled persons per day use them.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL includes $450,000 for BART to study extensions to study the Fremont-San Jose corridor and the North Concord area. Law prohibits BART from building any lines outside the three original counties it encompasses--San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa, but it will study the idea of an extension to San Jose anyway. BART can build outside these counties after it has covered unserved areas within them.

PARIS SUBWAY SYSTEM underwent a 24-hour strike on June 17. The resulting traffic jam was chaotic.

THE FLORIDA DOT is working to establish a light rail line between Clearwater (near the Amtrak station) and downtown St. Petersburg. NARP said that if Amtrak continues to serve Clearwater directly, the light rail-Amtrak transfer could become popular. In too many cities, NARP noted, new rail transit systems do not connect with Amtrak--Baltimore, Miami, Portland, and Buffalo, for example.

A Rail Travel Trilogy

I. ABOARD THE COAST STARWARS

by Walt Stringer

The COAST STARLIGHT is Amtrak's most popular long distance train, as it goes up and down the coastal area, stopping at the most populated places.

The quality of the train is still evident; however, dining on this train is a frustrating experience if you don't make the first call to meals. I had three meals on board during my mid-May trip--lunch, dinner and breakfast. The full diner was in use, and Amtrak's new menu is good. All checks are now numbered and accountable, with the steward liable for $10 if one is missing.

I was seated at lunch at 11:30 (having boarded in Los Angeles, enroute to Portland). The three-man crew made a few introductory announcements. They fill out and total the check, table by table. Meal service is also table by table, so if you are at the last table to be handled, your wait may be lengthy. My meal was served at 12:20 (not the last table) and for $5.50 I enjoyed the blue ribbon chicken sandwich with pie a la mode (with Hagen-Daas ice cream (both dessert items served in containers). Plastic trays and plates were used, along with metal utensils. The food quality was good; however, the dining car (car 38016) was a rough rider. The lounge (car 33007) also rode a bit rough, and both levels were manned, doing a lively business.

Each lounge attendant came on the P.A. to announce a 30-minute closure for his meal, tho it usually stretched to 45 minutes before he opened again. In mid-afternoon, dinner reservations were taken--5, 6, or 7pm were offered (other trains had 5, 5:30, 6, 7, 7:15, 8:30). I took a 5pm check, was seated at 5:10, order taken at 5:35, dinner served at 5:50. I had the steak entree, and it was quite good, with a tab of $9.75.

Our table left at 6:30, and since the crew would not let the next seating in until all the previous diners had left, the steward commented to me that the 6pm group was in the lounge having a "Lynch the Waiter" party.

Breakfast the next morning was a disaster (this was on Friday the 13th, for superstitious types). I was seated at 7am on the first call, and ordered the $2.75 two-egg entree. Due to adding a deadhead Hi-level car #39947 at Klamath Falls (from the derailment of train 14 at Dorris CA on the 11th--four cars were left behind and taken to Klamath Falls for inspection and deadheading), the head-end power was shut down at 7:30 and remained off for 35 or 40 minutes, thus ruining the diner schedule and service. I was served at 8:50, and one of the faults of HEP was revealed: there is no backup when it goes off. Crews must turn it off during work, since the electricity is deadly, and apparently there is no procedure for isolating the portion of the train being worked on.

While Amtrak food is much improved, service time is really suffering--later reservations were running 1-2 hours behind, with many complaints.

Operationally, the STARLIGHT was uneven. We left L.A. 5mins late and remained basically on-time to Sacramento. We made a one-second stop at Marysville for no passengers at midnight. Somewhere below Klamath Falls, according to other riders, we sat for 30 minutes for a huge SP freight, and then took the big delay at Klamath Falls to add car 39947, then enjoyed a sunny ride thru the beautiful Cascade range, leaving Chemult at 9:03 (over 70 minutes late) and arriving Eugene at 11:47am.

At Springfield Junction I noted an eastbound SP freight on the Siskiyou line with several Rio Grande engines. We left Eugene at 11:53 and sprinted up the Willamette Valley, with three stops and a schoolkids group Eugene-Salem.

Out of our 1-hour late Eugene departure came an on-time Portland arrival at 2:15, illustrating the "Portland Pad" in #14's schedule.

Altho I miss familiar domes on the STARLIGHT, it was a very pleasant Superliner trip, and the views of storm damage along the California coast were most vivid, including our creeping across the Santa Maria River Bridge above Surf; it had been destroyed, and a new one is in place. SP was surprisingly quiet for freight moves, and the train and diner crews made good use of the P.A. to explain delays, policies, and the equipment features. The dining crew was most gracious considering the problems their customers were enduring.

In coaches now smoking is permitted in the last six rows, so you must be careful where you sit, and the lounge is all smoking, a very serious deterioration of viewing pleasure from dome car policy.

A Rail Travel Trilogy

II. THE EMPIRE BUILDER STRIKES BACK

by Walt Stringer

I boarded the EMPIRE BUILDER in Seattle on May 16. About 60 people got on there.

The best thing about the BUILDER is its scenery. The Cascades and Glacier Park were beautiful with snowy peaks, in both clear and cloudy weather. The tenacious climb to Cascade Summit, the lushness of the apple country, the rocky majesty of the Northern Rockies in Glacier were spectacular. For GN traditionalists, I saw my first white mountain goat east of Belton, grazing on a cliff in the early morning hours. GN's Rocky still lives. Even the Big Sky country east of Glacier Park station (Amtrak's summer stop at the lodge) was most impressive, and we flew across it on good track.

I also enjoyed a conversation with Dave Ingles of Trains magazine. Dave and his Dad were returning from the Deschutes River excursion (see last issue), paying an exorbitant sum for a deluxe bedroom to Milwaukee. Dave noted that he had experienced slow dining car service coming west on train 5, and was also critical of Amtrak's downgrading of the Milwaukee corridor. Apparently passengers have trouble getting on the BUILDER to ride into Chicago to connect to other trains, and the BUILDER is the only decent connection of the day.

The most amusing incident of the trip occurred at Browning, when the conductor stepped into the operator's office to get change for a cash fare, and the brakeman highballed the train. My scanner picked up the Browning operator calling the engine, several hundred yards out, that the surprised skipper was still in the depot.

The BN had moderate freight activity, with only one meet in Glacier Park, but three in the Cascades, all in our favor.

After arrival in Havre I visited the community swim pool and then secured an economy bedroom on train 27 that same night for $38, from Whitefish to Portland.

* * *

That same day, the 17th, I left Havre to travel back to Portland. The BUILDER arrived 15mins late at 3:45pm, and left even later at 4:15, due to adding coach 34078 to the rear, after it had been badordered off train 8 the previous day. It appears that outlying crews have difficulty working with the somewhat complicated HEP cables, and the result is usually a delay to the train.

After leaving Havre, we rolled west, the prairie glinting in the afternoon sun. BN was running quite a few eastbound freights.

I took a 5pm dinner reservation and was served within 45 minutes (the crew on train 8 out of Seattle used the reservation system also, tho there were only 60-70 on board.)

The evening trip thru Glacier was beautiful, with passengers in the lounge enjoying the mountains, snowsheds, and herds of elk to the accompaniment of the conductor on the P.A. BN still maintains a series of green and white signs pointing out the highest peaks, and depots are attractively done also.

For dinner I enjoyed the Great Western, a veggie entree, with Inglenook chablis--a reasonable $7 meal, with a somewhat friendlier diner crew.

At Whitefish I moved to room 2 in car 32028, an upper in the middle of the car. The attendant wasn't terribly happy to see a new passenger or make the lower bed, even tho she admitted that a single should sleep lower versus upper without a window.

There was no problem getting a good night's sleep, and upon awakening I found us racing down the Columbia River on time towards Vancouver WA. Below Vancouver we met the MT. RAINIER, with 2 F40 engines and three cars, which is one engine and one car (the Portland training set) above the norm.

The conductor made several announcements about the scenery, the attendant served the coffee and tea, and the lounge attendant announced that he was out of everything except coffee. When I went to the lounge, however, he suddenly discovered an Am-McMuffin for me, and let me have most of a quart of milk to finish, for the price of a glass. The old problem of stocking trains adequately was showing up again.

Arrival in Portland was at 8:25, and passengers transferring to the STARLIGHT were offered a three-hour Gray Line tour of Portland to help kill time.

CONSISTS OF WALT STRINGER'S TRAINS: #14 COAST STARLIGHT: engines 243, 248; cars 1160, 39906, 31038, 31030, 34070, 34017, 39947, 33007, 38016, 32043, 32015.

#8 EMPIRE BUILDER: engines 303, 355; cars 1236, 39932, 34062, 38003, 32008. #7: engines 365, 297; cars 1238, 39917, 31034, 34006, 38006, 33012, 31040, 34022, 32028, 32050, 34078. #27: engine 227; cars 33012, 32028.

A Rail Travel Trilogy

III. RETURN OF THE JET-EYE

by Ted Blishak

On a travel agent tour to Florida, I jetted from San Francisco to Washington in mid-May on TWA's "Ambassador Class" service. This was my first experience with the service, a business-class section located between the coach and first-class cabins. There were extras: first-class food, free drinks, free headsets--but much of the time I was wishing for Amtrak's coach-style legroom.

This "familiarization trip", jointly sponsored by TWA and Amtrak, was the brainchild of rail enthusiast Tom Sponsler, a sales rep for TWA. We were to take Amtrak to Orlando to visit Epcott and Sea World, and after that I had arranged to continue alone, Amtraking back to Washington and riding the CAPITOL LIMITED.

In Washington we boarded the SILVER METEOR, where I was given a roomette in the center of a Heritage sleeper, and we left on time at 7:50pm.

We'd planned to have dinner immediately after boarding, but a power outage in the diner put them a half hour behind. Our sleeping car steward called us for the 8:30 dinner. Meals for first-class travelers are now included in the fare. One checks off food selections on a menu card, and presents a first class ticket. The steward then totals up the charges, writes "complimentary" across the bottom along with the table number, and takes it along to the chef.

This apparently fool-proof system was unfortunately turned into chaos by the dining car staff. After a 2-hour wait, our waiter, who seemed unable to comprehend the table numbers, served us meals with other table numbers written on the order. The result was that few in the dining car got exactly what they had ordered; but by 10:30pm people hungrily accepted any food at all. My companion and I had both ordered rare steaks. Mine was served raw, while my companion's was brown and had a charred appearance. We agreed there was no hope of sending them back and receiving a replacement, at least on the same day. So we cut the two cold steaks in half and shared them.

The food was barely luke-warm, so the tendency was to wolf it down before it became any colder. When I ordered apple pie a la mode for dessert, I received a lengthy lecture from the waiter to the effect that, while meal service was indeed complimentary, I was entitled to only one dessert. I repeated that I only wanted one dessert--apple pie a la mode; but if the addition of the ice cream presented a problem, I'd be more than happy to pay the extra 75¢! I eventually received the dessert I had requested, with melted ice cream, at no extra charge.

While clearing up, the waiter knocked over the remains of my bourbon and water, mumbled an apology, and did nothing about wiping up the flooded table. In an attempt to avoid a lap full of water, I used the paper tablecloth as best I could.

I slept soundly that night; the tracks are smooth and straight over the Seaboard Coast Line route.

I awoke around Jesup, Georgia, to infinite pine-covered flatlands. Breakfast was a re-run of the dinner scene: cold meals delivered to the wrong tables, but service was speeded up so that we had only a 45-minute wait this time. When I asked for my juice and coffee, which had not been served with the meal, the waiter replied with a dirty look and stalked into the galley. Lukewarm apple juice and lukewarm coffee were soon added to my repast.

We arrived in Jacksonville FL on schedule at 8:43am. A laborious switching operation took place here, as the 18-car train was split into two segments: to St. Petersburg via Orlando, and to Miami. Both dining cars were added to the other section, headed for Miami. A smoke-filled snack bar would be the source of our complimentary lunch. Amtrak's explanation for this was that there are no commissary facilities in St. Pete, so they cannot send dining cars there. This news was somewhat softened by the belated appearance, in our sleeping car, of the food basket which is part of the first class amenities on this train. It contained French wine, a dried-fruit and nut mixture, some cheese, and crackers, rye bread, and chocolate-chip cookies. Very tasty.

We continued on at speeds near the 79mph limit, with lots of whistling for grade crossings. This is not the Florida of the travel brochures, but has the appearance of an area that could not support a civilization. Buildings, some deserted, look old and faded, as if the population is drifting away to more profitable locations, leaving their trash behind.

At Sanford we saw the remains of the Auto-Train fleet: remnants such as a full-length dome, a UP dome diner and dome coach, a Hiawatha parlor sky-top lounge, etc., made up this scene of total desolation.

Winter Haven brought a welcome change in the scenery, with well-manicured gardens and attractive homes. We arrived in the pleasant-looking city of Orlando about 15 minutes early at 12:06pm.

Complimentary Cadillac limousine service brought us to the Gold Key Inn, and our group was provided with Budget rental cars, one for each four persons. We drove to Sea World, which at first glance appeared much like other amusement parks of its type. However, the performances of the animals was on a much more sophisticated level than anything we'd seen before.

Our tour of Epcott the next morning was disappointing. The vast, high commercialized center was full of long lines of people.

At 8:07pm on May 14 I was aboard Amtrak's SILVER STAR to begin the solo part of my journey. This was a train which had joined two sections (from Miami and from St. Pete) at Kissimmee, one stop south. This explains those cryptic arrows in the timetable; however, the passengers were rather confused by it all. It carried two snack cars (one Heritage and one Amfleet II); a Heritage diner newly equipped with blazing fluorescent lighting; three Heritage sleepers; one Heritage slumbercoach; and approximately six Amfleet II coaches, for a total capacity of about 400 people. (The trains were full thruout my trip; many people were taking advantage of the "All Aboard" fare.

Over the P.A. system the dining room staff asked for our patience; they explained that they had only one chef and two serving people. I was seated at a table with three other passengers who had placed their order 45 minutes before I arrived; their food took another 15 minutes to appear. My order took about 45 minutes to arrive; the food was well-prepared but lacked both the wine and the ice cream I'd ordered (perhaps because these were not part of my complimentary allotment). The waiter did try to collect for both later, but I explained that they had never been served.

Two of the women at the table were a gray-haired mother and middle-aged daughter. The daughter, who went to the bar car to order a drink during the long wait for dinner, received a lengthy lecture from her mother on the evils of alcohol and was accused of being an alcoholic. The daughter found her steak, when it arrived, not to her taste, and returned it, but kept the rest of the plate. When her new steak arrived, it included a new baked potato and vegetables. Mother exclaimed, "You don't need TWO baked potatoes!" and speared the spud with her fork. Daughter cried "That's MINE", and a tussle ensued, with both participants flailing arms and legs and becoming smeared with sour cream! Daughter then called the waiter, said she had "lost her appetite", and asked for a doggie bag. The waiter, anxious to get this pair out of the diner, complied quickly. They finally departed, knocking over a full glass of water onto the table as they went. The waiter thoughtfully provided me with a pile of napkins so I could clean up the mess.

Passengers I talked to on both trains were opposed to Amtrak's proposal to run bus service between Tampa and St. Petersburg, saying that they would fly rather than be subjected to the rigors of a bus transfer.

I went to the Amfleet II diner after dinner, where the service was excellent. One man staffed the bar, and a second took table orders.

I arrived in the diner for breakfast at 7 am; breakfast took about 45 minutes to arrive as I watched the North Caroline scene, trees and towns, roll by. We arrived in Washington at 1:45pm, I having skipped free lunch in the diner. It didn't seem worth the struggle, and I snacked on the food basket provided in my roomette.

* * *

It was now Sunday, May 15, and I boarded the CAPITOL LIMITED. Dome coach 9304 was at the end of the train. While all the other tracks had roofs over them, only the first two cars at the end of our train were covered by a roof, then about 150 feet of roof was missing. I had to run thru a pouring thunderstorm to get aboard. (The three rear cars were locked.)

Sleeper 2438 "Pacific Castle", second from the rear, appeared to be deadheading, as it carried no CAPITOL LIMITED number board. Lounge 28008 (Amfleet II) was later discovered to be the only food service car on the train, used as a diner/lounge. Amfleet II coaches 25101, 25120, 25087, Heritage sleeper 2888 with the name "Pullman" sandblasted off the nameboard, Heritage sleeper 2883 "Pacific Range", and two baggage cars completed the con-

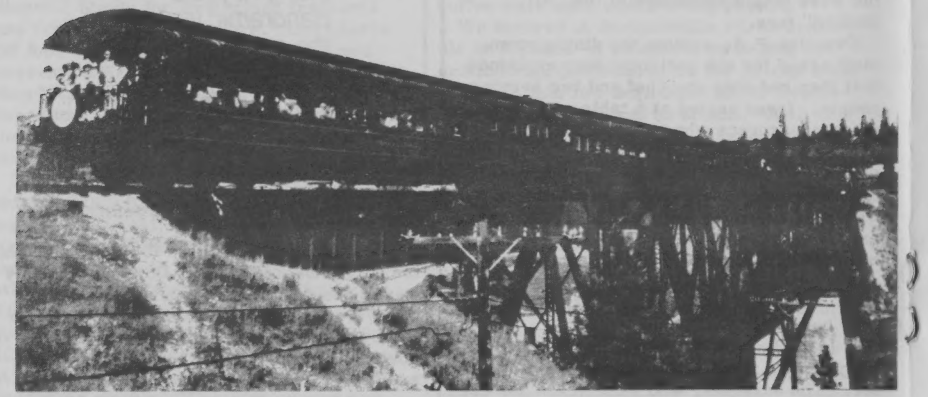
(continued on page 14)

Unlimited

Now Amtrak's Capitol Limited between Washington, Pittsburgh & Chicago has dome coaches that give you a panoramic view of the countryside.

View

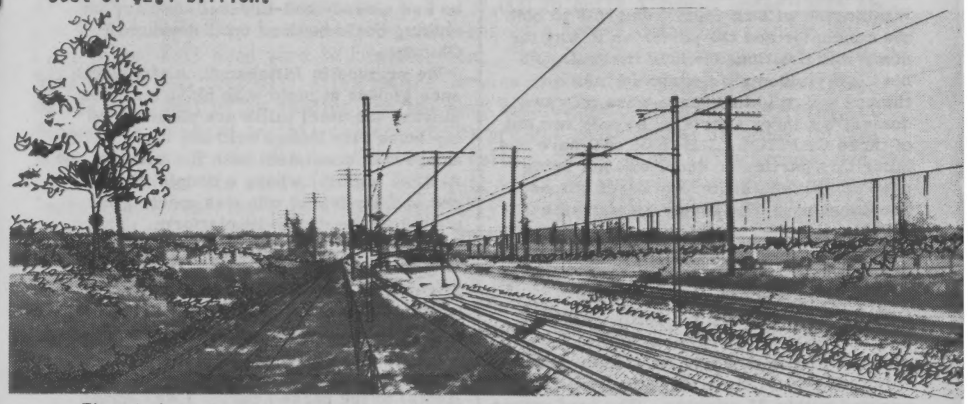
LAST MIXED TRAIN: Seaboard train 530 made its last run as a mixed train on April 29 from Milledgeville to Camak, Georgia. April 29 was the last day for passenger service on the former Georgia Railroad branch lines--the main line mixed trains were discontinued on May 6--and Seaboard assigned one coach to each of the branch line mixed trains. The coaches are veterans of steam excursions on Clinchfield and more recently on Chessie. Train 530 is shown passing a string of stored Auto-Train auto carriers just south of Camak. Photo by Lyle Key.



British Columbia Chapter of NRHS ran a special excursion train, the "Okanagan Express", from Vancouver to Penticton, B.C. May 21-23. Leaving Vancouver, the train went on the CP main line to Spences Bridge and then took the Kettle Valley Branch to Penticton at the south end of Lake Okanagan. It was an all-day trip thru scenic country. The tourists spent Sunday, May 22 in Penticton and returned to Vancouver by the same route on May 23. (That was the Victoria Day holiday weekend.) Consist of the train was: CP engines 8836 & 8839; cars (coaches) 301, 802, 901, 902, 741 buffet observation, 601 observation. All cars dated from the years 1926-1930. In the photo the train is crossing the Trout Creek Bridge on May 22. Photo by Gene Hines.

AMERICAN HIGH SPEED RAIL CORPORATION said in a May 17 press release that it plans to run its Southern California bullet train line in a trench thru the cities of Irvine and Tustin. "The high speed rail's new double-track line would be constructed some seven to eight feet below the existing grade of the Santa Fe railroad right-of-way. Plans also contemplate the lowering of the Santa Fe tracks, which carry Amtrak and freight trains, to the same depth as high speed rail tracks."

AHSR President Larry Gilson told the Irvine City Council that he was pleased that by lowering the rail alignment and separating the current street crossings they would be able to address one of the city's longstanding goals, at their cost. He said the cost of the work had been estimated in the original overall project cost of $2.1 billion.



The sketch shown here is of a view in Irvine, showing how the bullet train tracks should appear when completed. This view is looking toward Harvard Avenue. At this point, the top of the rail of the new line is seven feet below the top of rail of the Santa Fe.

In other AHSR news, the company's Gilson and Boyd traveled to Japan last month, meeting on May 12 with leaders of a Japanese businessmen's organization to ask for financial support for the proposed bullet train line. They want the Japanese to finance one-fourth of the construction cost. The Japanese agreed to study the proposal.

NARP OPPOSES ST. PETERSBURG BUS PLAN

The National Association of Railroad Passengers in a June 3 press release reiterated its opposition to Amtrak's plan to substitute a bus on the Tampa-St. Petersburg leg of the NY-Florida route. Comments filed by NARP President John R. Martin challenged Amtrak's claims that its bus plan would save St. Pete passengers one hour, 15 minutes in travel time. NARP's analysis, which uses assumptions favorable to the bus, is that time savings would range from 20 to 30 minutes for six out of eight schedules, and would be 50 minutes for the other two schedules (inbound service to St. Pete).

"For someone traveling from St. Pete to New York on train 88, saving 30 minutes cuts total trip time by 1.9% (from 26 to 25½ hours), a negligible benefit when offset against inconvenience of the forced transfer," Martin said.

Martin also questioned Amtrak's projection of no loss of revenue from passengers traveling between Pinellas County (St. Pete) and points from Savannah GA north. "This assumption," Martin said, "is inconsistent with what virtually every public

(continued on page 20)

RETURN OF THE JET-EYE (continued from page 11)

sist. I drew the line at running up thru the driving rain for an engine number! There were no luggage carts nor redcaps to assist boarding passengers.

After depositing my luggage and wet jacket in my roomette, I went back to inspect the dome coach; however, my progress ended at the Amfleet II lounge. The door was locked, so there was no access to sleeper "Pacific Castle" or to the dome behind it. In fact, these two cars were not coupled to the CAPITOL, and we left Washington without them! Queries to both the conductor and the porter as to why the dome was positioned behind the train and not used yielded a minimum of information. I was told that there were only two domes; but three consists, so only two out of three CAPITOL LIMITEDS will have one. Since this particular dome was not being used at all, this seemed to lower the odds considerably. The porter mentioned a problem with the windows, but had no details. We departed on time at 3:35pm.

When I arrived in the food service car for an early 4pm dinner, I ordered a bourbon on the rocks and settled in for a long wait (I was the only customer, but others came in as I was finishing my meal). I was pleasantly surprised when my meal arrived within 25 minutes. The beef entree, very palatable, was served with broccoli and scalloped potatoes--and, incongruously, orange juice. I ordered apple pie and ice cream for dessert, and the whole meal totaled only $8.75!

My tablemates, like many of the people I met on the train, were retired and traveling on the "All Aboard" fare. The consensus of those I spoke with was that Amtrak's onboard services were adequate, usually with the exception of the dining facilities.

I was dozing in my roomette during part of the one-hour delay we encountered near Martinsburg, West Virginia. The cause was a massive freight derailment, with hopper cars sprawled over the tracks, rails torn up and ties broken. The porter said the wreck had occurred on Friday and they had been working on cleaning it up--it looked as if it might take another couple of weeks to complete the job.

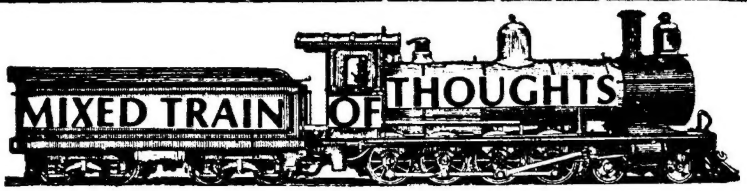
The porter explained that there was some padding in the schedule; so that while we were one hour behind, we expected to arrive in Pittsburgh only 25 mins late. I put the bed down and napped, knowing I'd be up late that night visiting with friends. Afterwards, attempting to use the plumbing facilities, I could obtain only a trickle of water from the tap to wash my hands. I mentioned this to the porter, who said he had already bad-ordered the car, but nothing could be done until it reached Chicago.

We arrived in Pittsburgh, a city which once glowed at night with blast furnaces. Most of the steel mills are closed, and my home city looked cold and dark. This image was consistent with the scene at the Amtrak station, where a couple of employees and my friend who was meeting me waited on the dimly-lit platform. The scene was similar to the one I saw in Washington, with the station itself dark, in ruins, and locked; temporary wooden walkways took one around the building to the "Amshack" behind. A temporary fence blocked the carriageway in front; it was about a half-block walk (with no streetlights) to the parked car. "I was afraid for my life," my six-foot, husky friend confessed. "This is a bad part of town!" I noticed that there were no taxis about; and cannot imagine how a passenger detraining in Pittsburgh without someone to meet and assist could possibly manage!

After a day and a half visiting friends and family, I was airborne again on May 17, taking TWA flight 265 to St. Louis, connecting with flight 177 to San Francisco. This time, I selected the first class cabin. The seats were a bit wider than Amtrak's coach seats, but with slightly less legroom. The meals were served on china and on time; the service was competent. A flight attendant was always nearby to fill my Champagne glass, and I reflected that this was truly first class service, the kind Graham Claytor may want but is not getting from the onboard dining car staff on Amtrak.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads cost just $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads are only $1.25 per square inch. Send your order to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

"ISSUES IN AMERICAN RAIL TRAVEL", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. Rail Travel News, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.



AMTRAK'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS met in Washington on Jun 15. The Board approved a commercial lease agreement for the Baltimore station, under which three commercial entities will lease space in the building. The Board approved the following six Commitment Approval Requests: 1) $5,299,000 to build a tunnel under Tenth Avenue in New York City to connect the east end of a tunnel being built under the Long Island Rail Road yard to Penn Station. This tunnel is to be part of the West Side Connection that will allow Empire Service trains to run into Penn Station. Amtrak said that altho funding for the West Side Connection is not completed, it decided to go ahead on this portion of the project at this time in order to save money and hassle; the MTA is starting to build a tunnel under Tenth Avenue, and if Amtrak combined its work with the MTA's, it would be easier for everyone concerned. Tenth Avenue reportedly is already partially barricaded for the start of the MTA construction. The MTA needed two years to obtain permission for construction under the avenue, which will be out of service for 18 months. Amtrak will do engineering studies first to prepare to let a contract for the actual construction, which will probably start in 3 to 4 months. The MTA tunnel is to be a 4-track affair, while Amtrak's will have one track. The funds approved on Jun 15 are for tunneling only, with the track being installed at some future date.....

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SECOND APPROVAL COMMITMENT request okayed by Amtrak's Board was for $805,000 to build a new station at Omaha. Two acres of land will be purchased for a 2925-sq ft building plus parking. It will be in the same location as the present station, and construction will start probably this fall, to be finished by May, 1984. 3) $729,262 to install continuous welded rail and ties on the last 1.3 miles of the Harrisburg main line east of Paoli. This is Phase II of the FY 82 track program. When the 1.3 miles of bolted rail are replaced, speed limits over the whole route can be increased, Amtrak said. 4) $918,000 to buy and rebuild 34 bi-level auto-carriers from Evans Car, to be used for daily auto-ferry service when daily operation begins next spring. (Amtrak already purchased 30 auto-carriers for tri-weekly service, which is to begin this fall.) The 34 cars were previously used by the Canadian National in its Car-Go-Rail service, and were built by Canadian Car Company. They will be overhauled at Beech Grove, with two of the 34 being cannibalized for spare parts. 5) $612,700 to modernize the New Haven steam power plant which supplies steam heat for Amtrak's New Haven facility. Amtrak now must spend $728,000 per year on oil for the plant, and will reduce that amount by $345,000 in the modernization. The plant was built for the New Haven railroad in the 1930's. 6) $1,572,778 to increase the capacity of Amtrak-owned fibres in its Washington-New York NE Corridor fibre optics network. Most of the fibres are owned by MCI, but by terms of its contract, Amtrak can expand the capacity of its own fibres, which are used in voice and data communication, and can commercially market the portion it does not use. The next meeting of Amtrak's Board will be in Washington on Jul 20.....

AMTRAK SCHEDULE CHANGES took effect Jun 13 and are listed in a folder designated NRPC For A-Supplement. The SAN JOAQUINS have added some new stops for their connecting buses. The Sacramento-Stockton bus now stops at Lodi. The "secret" bus from the SAN JOAQUINS at Hanford to Porterville via Visalia, Tulare and Lindsay is now officially listed in the Amtrak schedules. The Bakersfield-Los Angeles

bus adds two stops, at Saugus and Van Nuys. The Saugus stop is to serve Magic Mountain theme park, and is located at I-5 and Magic Mountain Parkway (Best Western Ranch House Inn). The Van Nuys stop is at 7610 Woodley Avenue, and the Lodi stop is at the corner of Victor and Beckman Roads. Advance reservations are required for northbound departures from Van Nuys and Saugus. The buses are financed in part by Caltrans. NE Corridor train 184, the VERRAZANO, now stops at BWI Airport Mondays-Fridays, and its internal scheduling is changed slightly. Southbound travelers can now board all Metroliner Service trains at Baltimore. Those trains which had been designated as "discharge only" have had this restriction removed. These trains will also depart Baltimore four minutes earlier than indicated in current timetables. The Chicago-Detroit WOLVERINE is being re-routed on weekdays between Jun 13 and Sep 4 while Amtrak does track work between Hammond and Kalamazoo. The train will bypass Niles but will stop at South Bend. A South Bend-Niles bus will transfer passengers. During this time the LAKE CITIES will add a stop at Dowagiac MI westbound only at 4:05pm. There are some small schedule changes to the INTERNATIONAL, with it leaving Toronto five minutes later, at 8:15am. (Altho the train is called the INTERNATIONAL LIMITED in the Apr 24 system timetable, it is the INTERNATIONAL in the supplement).....

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RIO GRANDE RE-ROUTING will take effect July 15, Amtrak hopes. Previously, July 1 was the date set by the Rio Grande for opening their line after the tunnel construction at Thistle, Utah. However, finishing the project has taken a little longer than estimates, and the Rio Grande plans on an opening around July 5-8, but Amtrak wouldn't start using the line for about another week. If Amtrak operations began July 15, from either end point, actual running thru Colorado would commence July 16. Meanwhile, on June 13 the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Wyoming's appeal and ordered Amtrak to continue running its trains thru Wyoming until the case is settled. The court set a date of Aug 5 to hear the case. Amtrak hopes to have the hearing set sooner--by July 8, or to reverse the order entirely, so it will be free to switch to the Rio Grande line.....

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DENVER RAILROAD SHOW, the "Great American Rail Roadshow" held on June 11, saw 7500 people going thru the equipment on display, and 2800 more riding an Amtrak excursion train which ran 15 miles up the freight-only Colorado and Southern line. The Colorado and Southern is part of the Burlington Northern system. On the following day, June 12, mayors of 150 cities and towns went thru the display. One of the cars on display was a Superliner sleeper fresh out of Beech Grove, which had a public bathroom installed on its upper level. (Eventually, all of the Superliner sleepers will have one, Amtrak said. Economy rooms also are now getting a net installed across the window for holding belongings.) Amtrak called the railroad show "very successful".....

ENLARGING DINING CREWS to relieve pressure took place June 15, Amtrak said. An additional man has been added in the kitchen of Superliner diners, and also a steward is added upstairs. This is being done on major Western trains--the SUNSET, SOUTHWEST LIMITED, COAST STARLIGHT, CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, and EMPIRE BUILDER.....

NEXT FEDERAL RAILROAD Administrator will probably be John Riley, NARP said. Riley is a passenger train supporter, and NARP said it is "hard to imagine a person more ideally suited for heading the FRA".....

LAKE SHORE LIMITED's recent cut of 82 minutes in its schedule was done by cutting padding and eliminating wheel inspections at Syracuse and Toledo, NARP said, not, as commonly believed, by speeding up the train. More time could be cut if the train were speeded up, but Conrail is resisting that. Conrail wants an incentive pay contract from Amtrak, but Amtrak demands faster speeds before such a contract is discussed.....

SAVING THE "SPIRIT": California's Assembly-Senate Conference Committee on Jun 9 voted 4-1-1 to include $5.2 million for the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA in the FY83-84 state budget. The budgeted amount includes funds for marketing and staff support. But Governor Deukmejian can still kill the funds with a line-item veto. NARP and Citizens for Rail California are campaigning to get rail supporters to contact Deukmejian (a mailgram would be best) and urge him to keep the train in the budget. CRC also suggests that supporters call Dana Reed, who as Business, Transportation and Housing Deputy Secretary is over Caltrans Director Leo Trombatore in authority. CRC notes that Mr. Reed has frequently ridden the SPIRIT, but thinks its cost is too high. NARP has been running a nationwide appeal for funds for an advertising campaign for the train. NARP said it needed contributions by Jun 18, but it probably still wants them. The advertising funds will be locally administered, CRC said, and under consideration is a saturation radio campaign in Santa Barbara and Oxnard. CRC wants more suggestions, too. Their address is: CRC Spirit Marketing Campaign, 2938 Loyola Dr, Davis CA 95616. NARP's address is 417 New Jersey Ave, SE, Washington DC 20003. Also under investigation is the possibility of "federalizing" the train via a special rider on the Amtrak appropriation bill, as was done with the CARDINAL. NARP reportedly believes this would be difficult, but not necessarily impossible. The key might be to require a Reno-Los Angeles interstate service, which would have a good chance of meeting ridership criteria. The State of Nevada is of course interested in an extension to Reno, and has been asked to put some pressure on the California officials. (Incidentally, the 46.1% upsurge in ridership on the SAN FRANCISCO/CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR in April--see page 23--was primarily due, Amtrak said, to Oakland-Reno riders, who found the train more reliable than the highway in this wet, snowy year).....

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JAPANESE BULLET TRAIN whose doors opened accidentally on May 12 (see RTN 267) was stopped and the passengers transferred to a later train. No one was injured, and fortunately there were few standees on the train, Yamabiko 17, a northbound Tohoku line Bullet Train. With more standees, some of them might have been near the doors, and could have been sucked out by the "tornado" of wind, as one passenger described it. The train was running at 170 km/hr. There have been earlier instances of one door opening, but this time all the doors on one side of the train opened. The cause was said to be a combination of conductor error and equipment malfunctioning. JNR engineers were reportedly seriously shocked by the incident.....

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THE UNMANNED STATION will be an increasing phenomenon on the Amtrak system. In RTN 266 we quoted Amtrak President Graham Claytor as saying "I will unman all except the most important stations on routes with only one train." Amtrak seems to be going ahead with plans to do just that, as NARP reports that Amtrak has confirmed that Gastonia NC and Slidell LA will stop selling tickets on July 1, and Galesburg IL will end ticket sales July 14. Amtrak reportedly has about 25 other stations in mind, in a memo that was said to be circulating around the head office. NARP said the memo is believed to include Texarkana AR, Hutchinson KS, Dodge City KS, Longview TX, and Temple TX.....

TRAIN MANAGER SYSTEM on Amtrak is to begin June 27, employing 18 train managers and 147 train chiefs, to ensure that an Amtrak employee with responsibility is on board every long distance train at all times. Said Amtrak, it "will ensure that the advertised level of service is achieved".....

IOWA RAILWAY FINANCE Authority will receive a $15 million loan from the state to buy rail lines abandoned by the Rock Island. Gov. Branstad signed the legislation on June 3.....

ST. LOUIS STATION question may be settled soon, reports the Missouri-Kansas Rail Passenger Coalition. They believe that Amtrak will agree to build a new facility at 20th and Market, the location of a parking lot at present, just west of Union Station. The latter is being developed into a hotel complex.....

KANSAS CITY STATION lease has been extended from Jun 30 thru Aug 31, to permit Amtrak to remain there longer while a permanent arrangement is sought. The station is being developed by Trizec Corporation, and MOKSRail reports that they are favorable to Amtrak's remaining somewhere on the property. Probably a new building for Amtrak will be built in the near future.....

THE SOUTHWEST LIMITED now has a dedicated luxury bus service meeting it each direction at Flagstaff AZ and running to Phoenix, with stops at Northern Arizona University, Cordes Junction, and Phoenix Northwest and Phoenix Metrocenter. Buses are operated by the Arizona Central Lines, phone 602-241-9191.....

KANSAS CITY STAR'S travel section of Sunday, Jun 12 was almost half-filled with an account of Amtrak travel by the travel editor, Catharine M. Hamm. She begins: "Amtrak claims that 'America's getting into training.' If you're planning a train trip, it had best be combat training." But she wasn't all negative. She seems to have enjoyed her 4100-mile trip around the West. She offered advice for rail travelers, such as "Expect delays in the dining car"; "Don't expect great food, but do expect reasonable prices"; and "Service will range from excellent to abominable"...

★ ★ ★

AMERICANS' VACATION PLANS are bigger this year, according to the New York Times. Amtrak told the Times that advance summer bookings are 20% higher this year than in 1982. Because of improved economic conditions and other factors such as cheaper and plentiful gasoline, and fare competition among public carriers, Americans are reportedly planning more summer vacations this year.....

CALLS TO AMTRAK have increased significantly this spring, indicating that more people are planning train trips this year. On the 25 days in May for which we have information, calls to Amtrak reservation offices were up 11.1% over May, 1982. The volume of calls was up every single day of the 25 days, with percentage increase in daily volume ranging from 4.6% to 19.6% on various days. The other side of the coin here is that the number of calls unanswered by Amtrak--lost--rose far faster than the volume of incoming calls. On only one day of the 25 did Amtrak manage to answer a higher percentage of incoming calls than it did in 1982. On the other 24 days the percentage of calls lost varied from 18.1% higher than 1982 to 844.8% higher! The average over all the 25 days was 175.1%. In other words, on the average in May Amtrak lost close to three times as many calls as it did in May, 1982. Amtrak was clearly unprepared for all the calls its advertising brought in. Just after mid-May, coinciding with the startup of newspaper advertising in over 50 markets, the volume of incoming calls rose significantly, but Amtrak's handling of the calls did not. Between four and eight thousand calls were lost each day in that period.....

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SOUTHERN PACIFIC TRACKS at the railroad's Monterey CA depot were torn up in mid-May. That segment of the branch line was not part of the purchase by Monterey and Seaside of the SP roadbed. A hotel is to go up on that property, if city fathers approve. However, the city's new mayor and councilwoman elected in May ran on the platform of "no more hotels for Monterey".....

IMPROVED PASSENGER AMENITIES on the New York-Boston run "did not work out as well as expected", said Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine, May 23 issue, and they failed to stem the tide of a 5-10% loss of its 25% market share in the NE Corridor. Air fare wars and low fares by People Express have hurt Amtrak.....

LAKE SHORE LIMITED should be speeded up more, Amtrak believes, and has various plans that might do it, according to Mass ARP reports. Amtrak wants to raise the speed limit of FL9 locomotives south of Albany NY from 80 to 90mph, and the speed limit west of Hoffmans from 70 to 79. These are part of faster speed proposals that Conrail seems to be balking at. A non-stop run for the LSL between Albany

and New York, with a local train between those cities to carry intermediate passengers is another proposal; also a shift of the full diner to the Boston section, with a lounge continuing on the New York section. These two cars would then run thru west of Albany. In other Empire Service news, trains 62 and 65, the NIAGARA RAINBOW and MOHAWK, might be discontinued due to a reduction in New York State's 403-b funding, reports Mass ARP.....

THE MONTREALER MIGHT get a new stop, in Greenfield MA, and possibly one in New Hampshire, reports Kevin Gregoire. Plans to reroute the train over the Central Vermont Railway have been shelved.....

"I'LL BE BURNED in effigy in Wyoming and probably hanged in real life in St. Petersburg if I venture down there" commented Amtrak President Graham Claytor at an Apr 5 luncheon in New York, report Kevin Gregoire. In other comments at the event, hosted by Official Guide President Paul Moore, Claytor said that Amtrak will do a big marketing blitz on the NE Corridor after the roadbed is smooth--not before. He said that now he can sell only speed, not comfort. On the topic of equipment, he commented that "We don't need in the next six to eight years any major new passenger equipment. Everything we've got will be able to be maintained in first class shape probably into the early 1990's." He said Amtrak will HEP more single-level diners and lounges so two diners can be run where needed, as on the Florida trains.....

SUBJECT OF EQUIPMENT came up in late March correspondence between Graham Claytor and NARP, reported by Kevin Gregoire. Claytor said that ten Heritage cars would be converted to high-density corridor seating, to save $700,000 per year. Amtrak is considering conversion of Amfleet cars to economy sleepers, with no upper berth because of too little space due to the cars' curved walls. Claytor indicated there was no hope for getting Heritage coaches or slumbercoaches on the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA. He said a San Diego thru car on the train is feasible but not cost-effective because of high switching costs at Los Angeles.....

CENTRAL VERMONT RAILWAY is no longer for sale. Owner Grand Trunk Corp. in May decided to retain it after reviewing several purchase offers.....

FIVE EX-GN DOMES that have been stored at Los Angeles were reported at the end of May being prepared for movement east, presumably to Beech Grove for rebuilding...

NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD would be bought by Brian Whipple if he has his way. Whipple was the creator recently of the Omaha-Peoria Iowa Railroad Co.....

News in this issue is updated thru June 18, 1983.

VIA

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ALL ABOARD FOR A VERY SPECIAL TOUR TO JASPER, COLUMBIA ICEFIELDS, LAKE LOUISE AND BANFF, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE AUTUMN COLORS, WITH TRAVEL BY THE FINE TRAINS OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY, VIA RAIL CANADA, AND COMFORTABLE SIGHTSEEING MOTORCOACHES...FEATURING THE CHATEAU LAKE LOUISE AND THE LOBSTICK LODGE IN JASPER.

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Travel Center

NARP OPPOSES ST. PETE BUS (continued from page 13)

transport specialist knows: forced transfers reduce market potential." Martin noted the depresing effect of Amtrak's discontinuance of rail passenger service to Cheyenne, Wyoming in late October, 1979, and the inauguration of a shuttle bus between Cheyenne and a new station at Borie. From Fiscal Year '79 to '82, ridership at all other Wyoming stations rose 44.5%, but at Cheyenne/Borie it rose only 5.3%. Martin noted that Amtrak had not done everything it could to make the operation more efficient, and he expressed concern that the opportunity would be lost for a future Amtrak-light rail transfer at Clearwater.

Carl Loucks

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MOVING?

Be sure to send RTN your change of address as early as possible. Don't rely on the Postal Service to forward your mail!

CARS & CONSISTS

New Amtrak car numberings:
#8600, ex-4622, ex-UP 5506, "Auto Ferry Table Car."
#8700, ex-3310, ex-SP 2988, "Auto Ferry Buffet Car."
#8701, ex-3311, ex-SP 2989, "Auto Ferry Buffet Car."
#8702, ex-3321, ex-PC7143, "Auto Ferry Buffet Car."
Newly-acquired bi-level and tri-level auto rack cars are numbered in the 9100s.

*MONTREALER, train 61, Montreal May 30: engines 349, 201; cars 1260, 2991, 2054, 28011, 4724, 4609, 21076, 28022, 25084, 25077, 25072, 21839, 21159, 20042, 21006, 21175, 21829 (several special parties aboard).

*PALMETTO, train 90, Savannah May 30: engines 268, 277; cars 1373, 4642, 4648, 4644, 3106, 4008, 4619, 4718, 20023, 4011, 4640, 4627.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, train 58, New Orleans-Chicago May 30: engines 723, 304; cars 1235, 2463, 28021, 4735, 4736, 4634, 4016, 20016, 4646, 4626, 4632, 4015, 4020, 20005*. (*On at Carbondale.)

West Shore Express excursion train, Tri-State Railway Historical Society, Hoboken Terminal to Selkirk NY, May 29: (NJ Transit equipment) engines F40PH-2's 4117 & 4119; cars 1766 "PRR Club", 1724 "RDG Club", 1735 "LV Club", 5115 "PRSL Club", 1609** "DL&W Club", 1723*** "L&HR Club", 1798 "LYO&W Club", 1602** "Erie Club", 1711 "NYC Club", 1752 "CNJ Club", 5107****. (*Restroom car; **Restroom & snack bar car; ***Railroadiana & books car; ****Private car for railroad officials.) Left Hoboken 8:30am, arrived back 8pm; 780 passengers.

*Amtrak Ringling Brothers circus extra, Sunnyside via Penn Station to Philadelphia, June 6, passing thru NY Penn Station 11:10am on track 11: Amtrak engines 974, 970, 972 (E60s); cars (Ringling Bros. equipment) 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 505, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 20, 22, 25, 21, 23, 24, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, Conrail caboose 23832.

*SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, train 15, Los Angeles May 28: engines 243, 247; cars 1126, 2997 "Pine Ridge", 2996 "Pine Hill", 28305, 21875, 21823, 21204, (on at Oakland for transfer to train 4 of May 28:) dome 9465, dome 9457 "Silver Buckle" deadheads.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The Interstate Commerce Commission and Southern Pacific Transportation Corp. could reach a settlement on the closure of the Willits-to-Eureka line as soon as this weekend, a federal agency spokesman said this morning...

"Meanwhile, Rep. Doug Bosco's office has been sounding out governmental officials and shippers on Southern Pacific's latest offer... Timber company officials contacted by the Times-Standard either had not heard about the deal or did not want to comment until they received something in writing from Southern Pacific.

"With Southern Pacific you check out the whole paper and then you check it again for invisible ink," Stan Parker, spokesman for Pacific Lumber Co., said."

--Heidi H. Holmblad in Eureka (CA) Times-Standard, May 20.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Amtrak's San Joaquin train will add stops in Van Nuys, Saugus and Lodi on June 1, the state California Department of Transportation has announced. The Van Nuys stop will be on Woodley Avenue at the Flyaway bus terminal. The Saugus stop will be at Magic Mountain Parkway and Interstate 5. The Lodi stop, which will include Amtrak bus service, will be at the Caltrans park-and-ride lot on Victor Road and California 99. Amtrak runs two trains daily in each direction between Union Station in Los Angeles and the San Joaquin Valley."

--Los Angeles Times, May 22.

(Does the Southern Pacific know about this?)

RAIL FANTRIPS

Jun 24-Oct 3: Historic Trolley Festival, San Francisco incl Car 178 & Blackpool Boat from Calif Rwy Museum. Market St. Parade Jun 23. Info: Chuck Vercelli, Bay Area Elec RR Association, PO Box 3694, San Francisco 94119; 415-931-4756.

Jun 18,19, Jul 16,17, Aug 20,21, Sep 17,18: Short excursions Baltimore-Mt Clare Jct, $2. B&O RR Museum's Old Number One, oldest regular-service Steam loco. Free bus from Baltimore Inner Harbor to Museum. Info: 301-237-2381 or 237-3821.

Aug 18-21: St. Louis, RR Enthusiasts Annual Convention & Directors Meeting. N&W #611 steam trip avail Aug 20, $44. RRE Convention c/o Eric Robison, 391 Cottage Road, South Portland ME 04106.

Aug 28: Sandwich Sunday. Bus along Cape Cod to Sandwich MA, lunch at Yankee Clipper; visit Sandwich Glass Museum, tour Heritage Plantation. Mystic Valley Railway Society, PO Box 32, Mattapan MA 02126. 617-361-4445.

Sep 10-11: Boston-Bangor ME via B&M & Maine Central (both Back Road & Lower Road). Package incl overnite lodging. Write for details & fares: Mass Bay RR Enthusiasts, PO Box 136, Ward Hill MA 01830.

Oct 1: Boston-White River Jct via B&M's Fitchburg and CT River Main Lines. Last chance to visit Steamtown USA (It's moving). Write for details and fares: Mass Bay RR Enthusiasts, PO Box 136, Ward Hill MA 01830.

Oct 8-10: 1983 Foliage International special Amtrak train Boston-Worcester-Springfield to Montreal via White River Jct. Info, send SASE: Mystic Valley Rwy Society, Box 32, Mattapan MA 02126; 617-361-4445.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

EXPRESS ADS

AMTRAK - VIA RAIL CANADA - EURAIL PASS - OCEAN LINER CRUISES - RAIL TOURS - RAIL EXCURSIONS - CHARTER RAIL CARS. Arrangements by phone or appointment - use your credit card - Tickets mailed promptly. A fully appointed travel agency with masters of ship and rail travel. GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, 639 Market Street, San Francisco CA 94105. (415) 398-2994.

GALA "MAIDEN VOYAGE" Holland America Line's NIEUW AMSTERDAM. Sails from Los Angeles Sat. Sept. 17 & from San Francisco Sun. Sept. 18....7-day Pacific Coast Cruise to Victoria, Prince Rupert, Alert Bay terminating at Vancouver, B.C., Sat. Sept. 24. Stateroom: Outside $699.00 & Inside $599.00 per person plus port tax. Hurry - Soon to be sold out. We have a few rooms still available. GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, 639 Market St, San Francisco CA 94105. (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

RAILROAD INFORMATION. 5-7 pages of NEW ENGLAND model railroad shows, railfan days, tourist railroad and rail excursion schedules. Send $3.00 for 4 issues (75¢ for sample issue) to RAILROAD INFORMATION, 77 Horne St., Dover NH 03820.

DELAWARE VALLEY RAILS, the 192-page railroad and rail transit guide to the 15-county Philadelphia region. Amtrak, suburban, trolleys, freight, industrials, etc. 25 rosters, 90 photos, 15 maps. $11.50 (Pennsylvanians add 69¢ tax). $12.50 outside U.S. John R. Pawson, Box 411, Willow Grove, PA 19090.

WANTED: 1 copy of FROM ZEPHYR TO AMTRAK (Prototype Publs) & ZEPHYRS CHIEFS AND OTHER ORPHANS (RPC Publs). R. Pee Jr, 5280 New London Trace, Atlanta GA 30327.

NATIONAL ASS'N OF TIMETABLE COLLECTORS wants you! Annual dues only $15 incl 15 issues + many activities. Tom Coval 21 E Robin Rd Holland PA 18966. Sample free.

Fantastic clear plastic public timetable slip covers. Finest quality. Only $8.99 per 100, 500 for $39. 1000 for $60. Also 55 timetables for only $13, a great bargain. Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Road, Holland PA 18966.

GLACIER RAIL HOLIDAY, five summer departure dates, fully escorted all-inclusive tours, using privately owned railroad cars. For additional information, contact Rio Vista Railways, PO Box 19992, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019. (213) 231-8442. Pay by check or credit card. Tickets sent to you by certified mail.

COLORADO PASSENGER TIMETABLES and folders of long ago, and many other passenger train items in our next Mail Auction. Catalog from Colorado Railroad Museum, PO Box 10, Golden, Colo. 80402. We are open the year around from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. just two miles from center of Golden, 15 miles west of Denver.

HOUSE FOR SALE. Watch Amtrak Chicago-St. Louis-Texas trains from living room. Solid, spacious two-story 1920's house, three bedrooms. Mid 50's. Residential neighborhood, excellent schools. Normal, IL. Call Tobe Easton, Weaver & Assoc. 309/827-5094.

SAM BASS DAYS celebration, Rosston, Texas July 16. Famous train & stage coach robber's hideout is 4 miles south of town, 1870's & 80's. Parade Marshall Jim Penton 817-768-2792. Parade 10am; bar-b-q beef meal noon; contests, sq dance.

NORTHERN PACIFIC R.R. CENTENNIAL Commemoration - Aug 25-28, Deer Lodge MT. Original 1880's Steam Locomotive in Operation. Re-enactments of 1883 Final Spike Ceremony. Displays, Exhibits, Pageant, Commem. Buckle & Coin. Write or Call: Last Spike Centennial Committee, Box 149 Deer Lodge MT 59722 (406) 846-1004.

"Rail Abandonments in New England, 1845-1981." New! Dates, details of more than 300 track abandonments. Complete index. $3.25 postpaid. Ronald Dale Karr, 7423 N. Winchester, Chicago IL 60626.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

APRIL 1983 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE (DECREASE) OVER 1982

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR		
METROLINERS	86,166	(15.2)
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR CONVENTIONAL	493,502	(10.5)
NEW ENGLAND METROS	5,995	.0
NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	20,324	9.6
NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	207,099	25.0
PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	75,111	5.1
NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	27,169	4.3
TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	915,666	(2.1)
SHORT DISTANCE		
NEW YORK-ALBANY-NIAGARA FALLS	60,062	(10.4)
CHICAGO-ST.LOUIS	23,173	(6.8)
CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	13,071	4.8
CHICAGO-DETROIT-TOLEDO	34,960	.0
CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	13,674	(6.2)
CHICAGO-QUINCY	5,979	(4.5)
LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	98,871	(9.2)
SEATTLE-PORTLAND	3,719	(23.3)
WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	15,396	(14.1)
OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	16,041	(8.6)
NEW YORK-MONTREAL	5,332	(8.7)
CHICAGO-PORT HURON-TORONTO	10,567	15.2
MINNEAPOLIS-DULUTH	2,207	(47.4)
CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	19,204	(18.7)
CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	3,904	(17.3)
CHICAGO-KANSAS CITY	12,059	(2.3)
PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	5,506	(31.7)
PORTLAND-EUGENE		.0
LOS ANGELES-SACRAMENTO	6,654	(24.7)
MIAMI-TAMPA	4,999	.0
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	355,378	(8.0)
LONG DISTANCE		
WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	9,319	(14.4)
NEW YORK-FLORIDA	72,236	8.0
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/WASHINGTON	23,177	6.5
CHICAGO-CIN-WAS-NEW YORK	8,057	(7.0)
CHICAGO-SEATTLE/PORTLAND	31,101	10.8
CHICAGO-OAKLAND	33,539	46.1
CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	21,742	.3
CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	17,829	(7.4)
CHICAGO-TEXAS	9,784	42.7
LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	8,319	24.3
LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	35,673	(5.1)
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/BOSTON	32,210	17.7
BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	9,085	13.4
NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	14,075	(16.7)
SEATTLE-SALT LAKE CTY/CHICAGO	11,463	1.9
NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	24,652	5.5
LOS ANGELES-OGDEN-CHICAGO	11,406	7.6
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	373,667	7.1
SPECIAL TRAINS	2,730	(49.9)
SYSTEM TOTAL	1,647,441	(1.7)

Here are the latest Amtrak ridership figures, for April 1983. The March figures appeared in RTN #266.

While the March figures showed a hefty 15.3% systemwide increase over March 1982, April's systemwide ridership total was down 1.7% from the comparison month, April 1982. The total for this April was 1,647,441 compared to 1,675,525 in April 1982.

Long distance patronage made the best showing this month with a 7.1% increase, apparently stimulated by the All Aboard America discount fare plan. Short distance trains were down 8.0% and Northeast Corridor patronage was off 2.1%. New York-Philadelphia patronage continued to put on a good showing because of the SEPTA strike (tho not as high as in March, when there was a total of 376,613 riders).

For the fiscal year to date (Oct 82 thru Apr 83) systemwide ridership was down 3.6%, with 10,571,365 riders compared to the previous year's 10,965,753.

The blank in the Portland-Eugene slot indicates the discontinuance of the WILLAMETTE VALLEY trains. The Miami-Tampa trains are too new to have a comparison figure from last year.